



TO: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance of the Wisconsin Legislature
FROM: Wisconsin Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
RE: Section 26 of Motion #457 of the 2015-2017 WI State Budget Bill
DATE: June 9, 2015

In the early hours of Wednesday, May 20th, the K-12 Omnibus Motion #457 was introduced to and approved by the legislature's Joint Committee on Finance. This was done with little discussion or debate, and without seeking input from professional educators; the Department of Public Instruction; public, charter, or private school administrators, staff and teachers; parents or citizens whose schools would be affected. Coverage of this proposal (See attached list.) has been widespread and largely negative, focusing on the "lowering" of standards for teachers in Wisconsin. As the budget process moves toward its conclusion, we want to remind legislators of the basic reasons for removing Section 26 of Motion #457 from the final budget bill.

Many provisions of Motion #457 are problematic but among the most objectionable are several that will strip away requirements for a grades 6-12 teaching license previously established by the legislature in PI 34 (2000). Provisions in Section 26 Motion #457 will:

1. allow anyone with just a college degree to teach English, mathematics, science, or social studies courses in grades 6-12 and get a full license if a school board, charter school, or private school "determines" they are proficient and have relevant experience;
2. allow anyone to teach all other subjects (world languages, physical education, health, art, music, theatre, etc.) in grades 6-12 and get a permit to do so if a school board, charter school, or private school "determines" they are proficient and have relevant experience; and
3. allow anyone who can earn a minimum number of points on a flexible point system to get a full license to teach technical subjects—whether or not they have any relevant experience working with adolescents whatsoever.
4. require that the Department of Public Instruction, a state agency, design and offer an on-line alternative teacher licensure program—a program that would only be subject to oversight by the DPI itself which approves all educator preparation programs in the state.

What constitutes proficiency or relevant experience or how either will be determined are not stipulated in Motion #457, and the Motion explicitly prohibits the Department of Public Instruction from imposing any "additional requirements" for individuals put forward for a license under these regulations.

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the proposal in Section 26 is that it contradicts the legislature's own requirements for teacher licensure as established in PI 34 in 2000. Those regulations, the result of careful deliberation and consultation with all relevant stakeholders, stipulate that to qualify for a teaching license in the state of Wisconsin a person must meet extensive requirements for grade point average, course work, clinical experience and student teaching, testing, and presentation of a professional portfolio. Beginning in 2016-17, new teachers completing an approved teacher education program in Wisconsin will also have to pass a rigorous performance assessment of their teaching, the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), before they can be licensed. None of these standards would apply to those individuals licensed under Motion #457.

Teachers who have completed a state approved teacher education program in Wisconsin are now eligible to become licensed in surrounding states. None of those allowed to teach in grades 6-12 under the provisions of Motion #457 would qualify for similar treatment. Do we really want Wisconsin's standards for teacher licensing to be the lowest in the nation? Whatever reservations we may have about the *Race to the Top* policies of President Obama's administration, surely we do not want Wisconsin to race to the bottom.

Section 26 of Motion #457 in the budget bill sends the message to students in our state-approved educator preparation programs that the high standards they must meet to become licensed teachers are not valued. They and their parents might well wonder why they are paying for an educator preparation program when others will be allowed to enter the profession based solely on a local recommendation. Moreover, we want to remind members of the legislature that Wisconsin moved away from a system of county by county teacher licensure in the 20th century specifically to insure that all teachers in the state's publicly funded schools would be similarly qualified for their work—a basic requirement if the schools are to meet the state's constitutional obligation to provide its children with schools that are "as nearly uniform as practicable." (WI State Constitution, Article X, Section 3) The pathway to licensure described in Section 26 essentially returns the state to localized teacher certification, a path no other state in this country has pursued.

As parents and educators of teachers, we urge you to work to remove Section 26 of Motion #457 from the budget bill. The teacher education community has and will continue to work with our PK-12 partners to craft alternative teacher licensure pathways that provide schools and school districts the flexibility they need to place highly qualified teachers in all classrooms, but such pathways cannot be based on lowering of requirements and standards or bypassing the authority of the Department of Public Instruction to oversee teacher licensure. Working together we can insure that the state meets its constitutional obligation to provide equal educational opportunities for all its children.

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Media Coverage of K-12 Omnibus Motion #457, Section

Wisconsin News Stories and Editorials

[Eau Claire Leader Telegram – June 1, 2015 - Opinion Editorial by Dr. Brian McCalister](#)

[Green Bay Press Gazette – May 30, 2015 - Editorial](#)

[Madison Capitol Times, May 20, 2015 – Article by Jessica Opioen](#)

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 27, 2015 – Article by Erin Richards](#)

[Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 28, 2015 - Editorial](#)

[Wisconsin Public Radio – May 28, 2015 – News Story by Shawn Johnson](#)

[Wisconsin State Journal, May 20, 2015 – Article by Molly Beck](#)

[WISC TV News 3 – Madison – May 28 2015 - Article by Dave Delozier](#) - Similar stories were aired by Fox 11 (Green Bay) and WMTV 15 (Maidosn).

News Coverage Outside Wisconsin

[Minneapolis Star Tribune – May 28, 2015 – Article by Scott Bauer \(Associated Press\)](#)

[Washington Post Blog Post by Valerie Strauss – May 28, 2015](#)